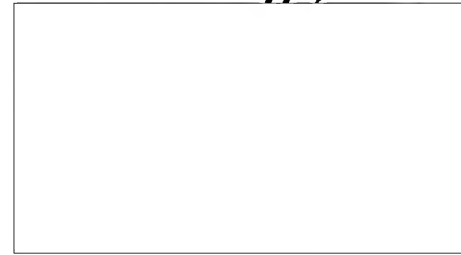




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# Afghanistan Situation Report



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6 August 1985

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**AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT****CONTENTS****SOVIET OPERATIONS END IN HERAT AND THE PANJSHER****1**

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Soviet operations in Herat and the Panjsher Valley have ended, and troops have returned to garrison. [REDACTED]

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**IN BRIEF****2****PERSPECTIVE****SOVIET ATTITUDES TOWARD THE WAR****4**

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Recent polls indicate that Soviet public support for the war in Afghanistan has declined, but this trend probably is balanced by a general acceptance of government policy that Soviet interests in Afghanistan require continued involvement there.

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This document is prepared weekly by the Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis and the Office of Soviet Analysis. Questions or comments on the issues raised in the publication may be directed to [REDACTED]

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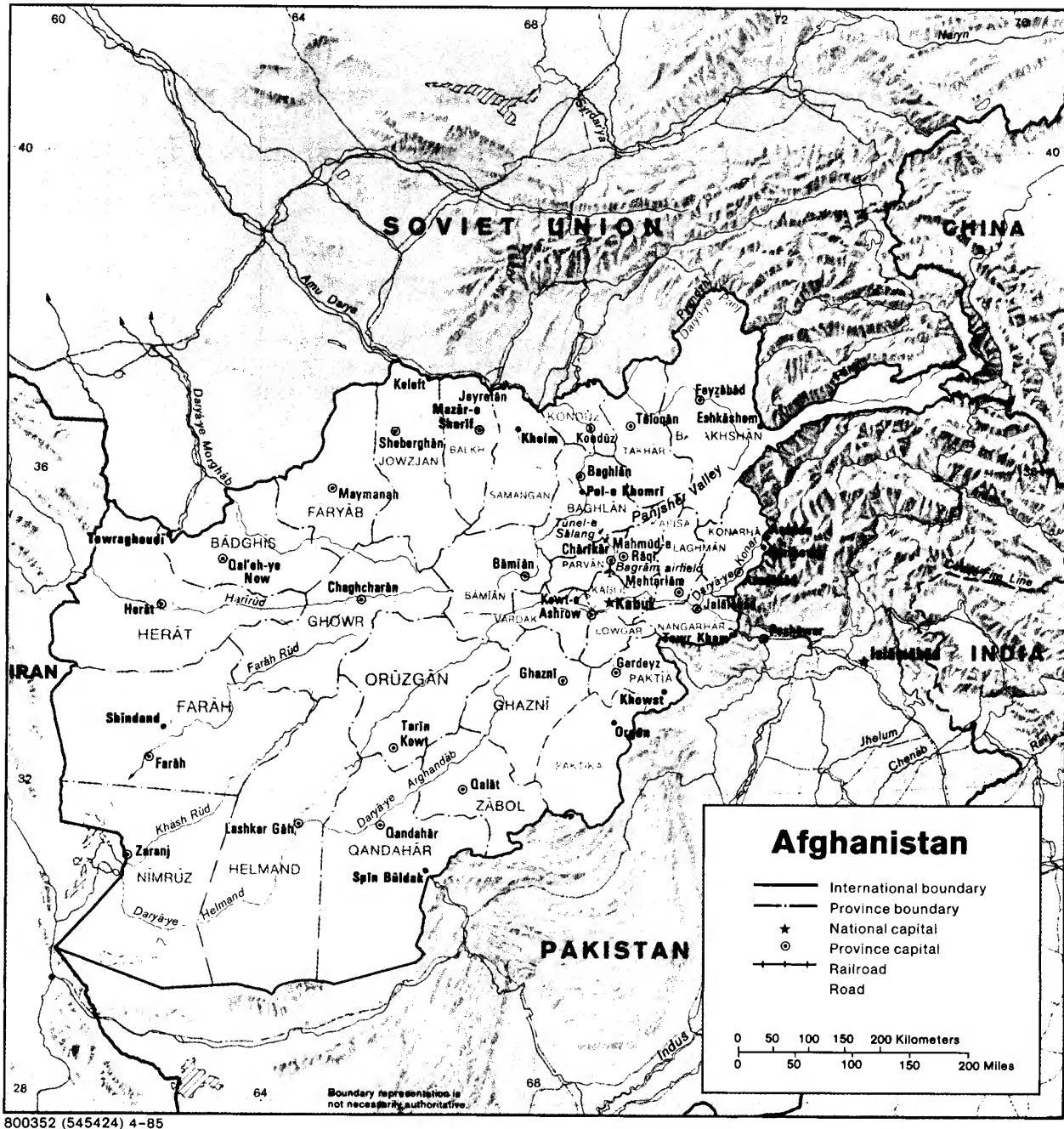
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**SOVIET OPERATIONS END IN HERAT AND THE PANJSHER**

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[REDACTED]

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that the Soviet offensive in the Panjsher Valley ended by 1 August and that Soviet forces have returned to garrison. One Soviet motorized rifle regiment remains in the valley in Rokha and battalion-size Afghan units are deployed at Bazarak, Barak, Tahana, and Peshghowr.

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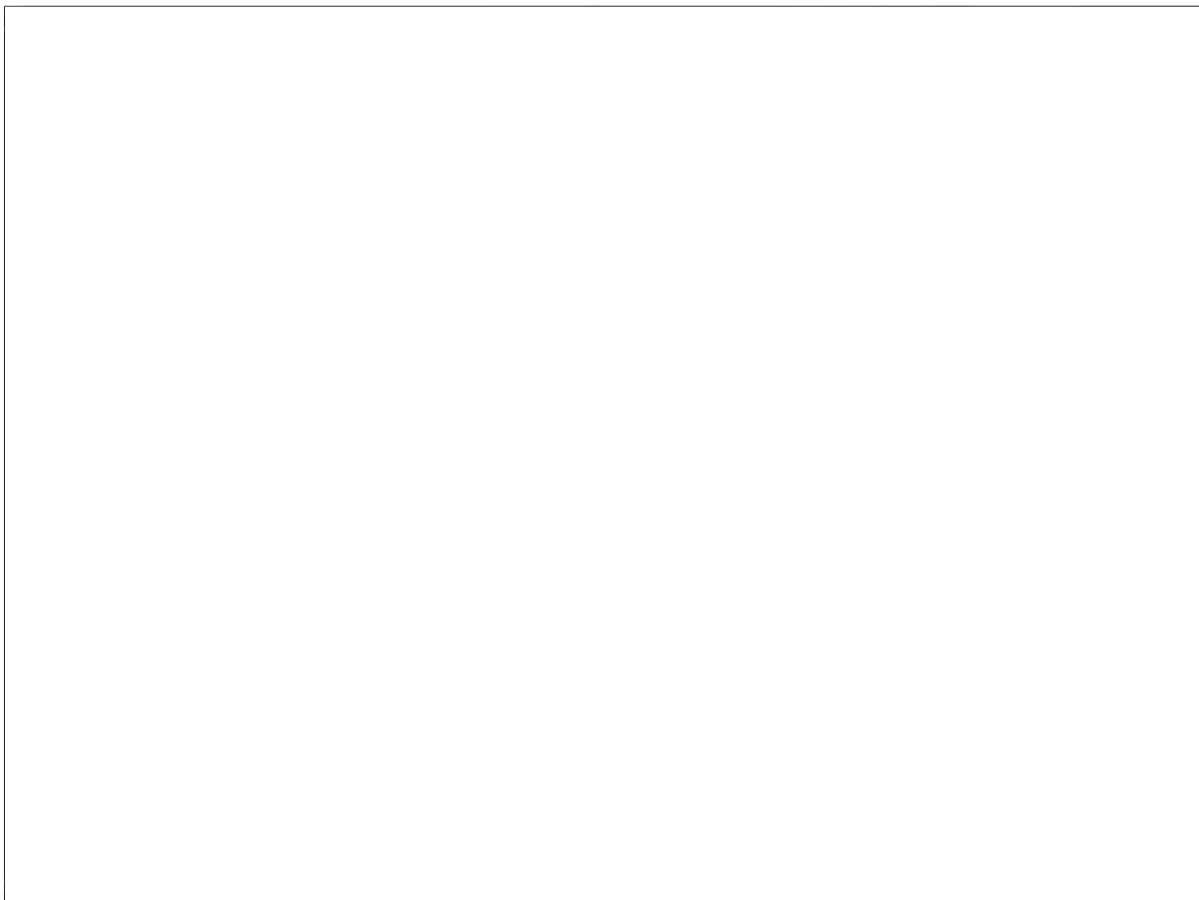
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**IN BRIEF**

-- Insurgent sources claim to have shot down a Soviet-made transport as it was landing at an airport near Khowst on 27 July. [REDACTED] the presence of a damaged Soviet An-12 Cub aircraft.

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- Officials of the International Medical Corps, the US volunteer health organization that has been operating inside Afghanistan since April 1984, have decided the dangers from Soviet military operations are too great to continue their activities in the country. The International Medical Corps instead will provide paramedical training to Afghans in Pakistan.

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**PERSPECTIVE**

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**SOVIET ATTITUDES TOWARD THE WAR**

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Recent public opinion polls suggest that Soviet support for the war in Afghanistan has declined sharply since 1980. Radio Liberty interviews with some 2,960 Soviets who traveled to the West in 1984 indicate that about a quarter of the group expressed support for Soviet policy, a quarter were opposed, and half had no opinion. This is a significant change from a similar poll in 1980 when some two-thirds of the 564 Soviets interviewed expressed support for their government's policy. Other polls we have examined support Radio Liberty's major finding--that public support for Moscow's Afghanistan policy is falling.

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**Radio Liberty's Findings**

The Radio Liberty poll suggests that support for Soviet Afghanistan policies varies with geographic area, nationality, party membership, age, and sex.\*

- Support for Soviet policy is strongest in the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, particularly in the Moscow area. Disapproval is highest in the non-Russian areas of the Soviet Union, particularly in the Baltic States, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, and among non-Russian nationalities.

\* Radio Liberty interviews were conducted by a contractor and the interviewees did not know their views were being reported back to Radio Liberty. The major flaw in the Radio Liberty poll is the sample used: interviewees are members of the elite who do not represent the Soviet population as a whole. Most are educated, urban males aged 30-49 who are Communist Party members and who reside in the European part of the USSR. Nevertheless, using an MIT computer model designed to correct for these biases, Radio Liberty has been able to project the attitudes of this sample to the Soviet urban population as a whole. These projections are used in the tables and the analysis.

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- Central Asians display both high approval and disapproval of Soviet policy. This may reflect differences between the nonassimilated indigenous people of the region and the Slavic emigres, and those indigenous people who have been assimilated.
- Communist Party members--not surprisingly--voiced much greater approval of government policy than non-party members; of those party members who voiced disapproval of government policy, two-thirds were non-Russian.
- Soviet young people are less opposed to Moscow's involvement than members of the older generation--perhaps because the young have no first-hand experience of war and/or are less interested in political matters than their elders.
- The better educated are also more likely to support Soviet policy.
- There were no significant differences between men and women, although women were slightly more likely to approve official policy and slightly less likely to be ambivalent.

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Table 1

**SOVIET ATTITUDES TOWARD AFGHANISTAN**

(Urban Adults)

	<u>Disapprove of Official Policy (percent)</u>	<u>No Clear Attitude (percent)</u>	<u>Approve of Official Policy (percent)</u>
Total Population*	25	51	25
<u>Communist Party Membership</u>			
Members	8	37	55
Nonmembers	26	52	22
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	13	62	25
30-49	31	46	23
50 or over	30	44	27
<u>Education</u>			
Less than Secondary	24	58	18
Secondary or More	26	39	35
<u>Sex</u>			
Male	25	53	22
Female	25	49	26

\* Total percentages may not equal 100 because of rounding. All percentages reflect MIT's extrapolation of poll data to the Soviet urban population at large.

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The survey notes that few Soviets expect the Afghans to emerge victorious from the conflict. Nearly three-quarters of the respondents do not accept official assurances that the Afghan problem can be resolved and believe that the situation will remain stalemated indefinitely. The same people who oppose Soviet intervention in Afghanistan are also most pessimistic about the prospects of Soviet success there. In Central Asia even those who approve Soviet policy do not believe strongly in Soviet success.

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Table 2

**PROGNOSES FOR SUCCESS OF SOVIET POLICY**

(Soviet Urban Adults)

	(Percent)
No Clear Soviet Success	24
Uncertain	53
Clear Soviet Success	<u>23</u>
Total	100

**Other Recent Polls**

The findings of the Radio Liberty poll are consistent with the results of two other polls received in the last six months. In February, USIA published the results of its third surrogate poll on Soviet elite attitudes and perceptions on a wide range of internal and external questions.\* The USIA interviews, which were conducted between December 1983 and May 1984, showed that dissatisfaction with Soviet involvement had become widespread in elite circles. Although three-

\* USIA interviewed about 166 US and West Europeans in frequent contact with members of the Soviet elite and asked them to respond as they believed their Soviet contacts would on a number of issues. USIA then weighted their responses according to the degree of the interviewee's knowledge of the USSR, number of contacts and degree of intimacy, accuracy of recall, and command of the Russian language.

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fifths of senior officials still agreed with the statement "In sending Soviet troops to Afghanistan, the Soviet leaders did precisely what they had to do," only one-third of mid-level officials did. In contrast to the 1980 and 1981 surrogate polls, some admitted that major mistakes had been made, and two-thirds expressed misgivings about whether the intervention was worth the price in lives, resources, and lost prestige. [ ]

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Human rights activists in Moscow also queried some 287 individuals in the Moscow area in early 1984. It found the highest degree of internal opposition to involvement in Afghanistan--62% of those queried. Their poll was the least scientific and its results the most suspect, however, because of the bias of the interview. [ ]

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Table 3

**USIA SURROGATE POLL ON SOVIET ELITE ATTITUDES  
SOVIET LEADERS WERE RIGHT TO SEND TROOPS**

(Percent)

**Senior Officials**

Strongly Agree	22
Agree Somewhat	37
Strongly Disagree	9
Disagree Somewhat	<u>31</u>
Total	100

**Mid-Level Officials**

Strongly Agree	5
Agree Somewhat	28
Strongly Disagree	26
Disagree Somewhat	<u>41</u>
Total	100

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Table 4

**DISSIDENT POLL ON SUPPORT FOR THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN**

	(Percent)
Support the War	13
Support with Reservations	16
Not Interested	4
No Opinion	5
Do Not Support	<u>62</u>
Total	100

**Outlook**

Even though the three polls have varying degrees of credibility, they suggest that popular enthusiasm in the USSR for the USSR's venture in Afghanistan--even among the elite--is waning. Nonetheless, the polls do not tell us how intense opposition to Afghanistan policy is, and other reporting--including diplomatic observers, journalists, and most expert travelers--suggests that negative feelings about the war are balanced by a broad acceptance that Soviet interests in Afghanistan require continued involvement. Disenchantment with Soviet policy in Afghanistan, moreover, is surpassed by popular concern about other issues, such as the economy.

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